

## CHAPTER SIX

### Richard Howell Ashmore B.A., 1903-1905

#### MR.ASHMORE'S APPOINTMENT

R.H.Ashmore was one of several applicants for the post of Headmaster, when it was advertised in the Belfast press and in the *Irish Times* in August 1903. Those applicants were sent the following information by the Governors.

*'There is an income of about £80 which, under the Scheme, the Governors may apply in maintaining, or aiding in maintaining, in or near Bangor, an Intermediate School. There are no school buildings under the Scheme. The income from the endowment has hitherto been paid to the Headmaster of Bangor Grammar School, W.G.Conolly LL.D. . . . Dr.Conolly has used, for the purpose of the School, two dwelling houses, the rent of which, £90, and taxes, was paid by him. One of these houses, he used for the School and the other for Boarders. In the School, he has fitted up a Science Laboratory, at a cost of about £100. The average number of pupils has been 40 dayboys and 16 boarders; average fees: dayboys £7-10-0, Boarders £40. Dr.Conolly is prepared to dispose of his interests in the Grammar School buildings on favourable terms - about £100, inclusive of laboratory. The only income under the control of the Governors is the above sum of about £80. Dr.Conolly employed three assistant masters. In short, the School was under the sole control and management of Dr.Conolly, but the Governors, during his tenure of office, paid him the income arising from the endowment funds. Dr.Conolly informs me that the fees from the Intermediate and Technical Departments last year amounted to about £160 and the fees from dayboys to about £240.*

*W.Irwin Mahaffy, Hon.Sec.  
Ward Villa East,  
Bangor'*

Mr.Ashmore was born in Creevelea County Leitrim on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1872, the son of Rev.John and Mrs.Martha Ashmore. He was the unanimous choice of the Governors, on condition that *'he open a school satisfactory to the Governors'*. Presumably he agreed, although he did tell them not to apply for a renewal of recognition of classes in Experimental Science and Drawing, and so the £23-7-8, received from the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, as a result of Dr.Conolly's request for a grant towards the purchase of scientific apparatus more than two years earlier, was forwarded to him in Waterford.<sup>1</sup> He did, however, commence Evening Classes in September 1904, *'to read for Royal University Examinations'*.<sup>2</sup>

It is said that numbers attending the School were small, many of the pupils having transferred to the *Royal Belfast Academical Institution* and that the School was using the *Good Templar Hall* in Hamilton Road, next door to the present *Northern Bank* building, the home of the *Ward School* with which there was great rivalry.<sup>3</sup> However, the only reference in the Board of Governors' Minutes to that hall is to its use for a month in 1893. Mr.Ashmore was said to be living in *'Belgravia, Seacliff'* (a terrace at 176-182 Seacliffe Road).

Thomas McBride recalled:

*'In Mr.Ashmore's time, the School was to a certain extent nomadic. It passed from College Gardens to that thirsty land of the Good Templar Hall, to 20 Princetown Road, back to College Gardens and finally, with Mr.McFeeters Headmaster, it arrived at its present site'.<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Mr.Ashmore's Attestation Papers, preserved in the Library and Archives, Canada; Minutes of the Board of Governors, 25 August 1903 and 1 October 1903.

<sup>2</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 2 September, 1904.

<sup>3</sup> Rev.Fred Smith in *The Gryphon*, December 1963.

<sup>4</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 8 July 1939.

13/12/16

ATTESTATION PAPER.

No. 525078

Folio.

CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

QUESTIONS TO BE PUT BEFORE ATTESTATION. (ANSWERS.)

- 1. What is your surname?..... Ashmore
- 1a. What are your Christian names?..... Richard Howell
- 1b. What is your present address?..... McKay, B.C.
- 2. In what Town, Township or Parish, and in what Country were you born?..... Creevelea, Co., Leitrim, Ireland
- 3. What is the name of your next-of kin?..... Mary Ashmore
- 4. What is the address of your next-of-kin?..... McKay, B.C.
- 4a. What is the relationship of your next-of-kin?..... Wife
- 5. What is the date of your birth?..... 22nd, February, 1872
- 6. What is your Trade or Calling?..... Teacher
- 7. Are you married?..... Yes
- 8. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated and inoculated?..... Yes
- 9. Do you now belong to the Active Militia?..... Yes
- 10. Have you ever served in any Military Force?..... Yes 18th, Field Amb, Vancouver B.C. 1 month  
If so, state particulars of former Service.
- 11. Do you understand the nature and terms of your engagement?..... Yes
- 12. Are you willing to be attested to serve in the }  
CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE? }..... Yes

DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, Richard Howell Ashmore, do solemnly declare that the above are answers made by me to the above questions and that they are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements by me now made, and I hereby engage and agree to serve in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, and to be attached to any arm of the service therein, for the term of one year, or during the war now existing between Great Britain and Germany should that war last longer than one year, and for six months after the termination of that war provided His Majesty should so long require my services, or until legally discharged.

R. Ashmore (Signature of Recruit)  
Date November 11th 1916. V. B. Campbell (Signature of Witness)

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, Richard Howell Ashmore, do make Oath, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will as in duty bound honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown and Dignity, against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and of all the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.

R. Ashmore (Signature of Recruit)  
Date November 11th, 1916. V. B. Campbell (Signature of Witness)

CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE.

The Recruit above-named was cautioned by me that if he made any false answer to any of the above questions he would be liable to be punished as provided in the Army Act. The above questions were then read to the Recruit in my presence.

I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to, and the said Recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me, at Victoria B.C. this 11th, day of November, 1916.  
Wm. Gordon (Signature of Justice)  
U.C.A.M.C. Training Depot No. 11, C.E.F.

M. F. W. 23  
750M-9-14  
R. Q. 1773-83-841

**Description of Richard Howell Ashmore on Enlistment.**

Apparent Age <u>44</u> years - months. <small>(To be determined according to the instructions given in the Regulations for Army Medical Services.)</small>		Distinctive marks, and marks indicating congenital peculiarities or previous disease.  <small>(Should the Medical Officer be of opinion that the recruit has served before, he will, unless the man acknowledges to any previous service, attach a slip to that effect, for the information of the Approving Officer.)</small>
Height <u>5</u> ft. <u>10½</u> ins.	1 Vac, Right	
Chest measurement	Girth when fully expanded <u>41</u> ins.	
	Range of expansion <u>5</u> ins.	
Complexion <u>Ruddy</u>		
Eyes <u>Blue Grey</u>		
Hair <u>Grey</u>		
Religious denominations	Church of England <u>Yes</u>	
	Presbyterian	
	Methodist	
	Baptist or Congregationalist	
	Roman Catholic	
	Jewish	
Other denominations (Denomination to be stated)		

**CERTIFICATE OF MEDICAL EXAMINATION.**

I have examined the above-named Recruit and find that he does not present any of the causes of rejection specified in the Regulations for Army Medical Services.

He can see at the required distance with either eye; his heart and lungs are healthy; he has the free use of his joints and limbs, and he declares that he is not subject to fits of any description.

I consider him\* fit for the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force.

Date November 11th, 1916

Place Victoria B.C.

*[Signature]*  
 Medical Officer.

\*Insert here "fit" or "unfit".

NOTE.—Should the Medical Officer consider the Recruit unfit, he will fill in the foregoing Certificate only in the case of those who have been attested, and will briefly state below the cause of unfitness:—

**CERTIFICATE OF OFFICER COMMANDING UNIT.**

Richard Howell Ashmore having been finally approved and inspected by me this day, and his Name, Age, Date of Attestation, and every prescribed particular having been recorded, I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.

*[Signature]*  
 Major, (Signature of Officer)  
 G. G. A. M. S. Training Depot No. 1, C.E.F.

Date November 11th, 1916.

## THE SEARCH FOR A PERMANENT HOME

Less than two months after his arrival, Mr.Ashmore wrote to the Governors about the possibility of erecting new school buildings<sup>5</sup>, and it was during his brief stay in Bangor, that positive steps were taken to procure a permanent home for the School. Several years after the original school building had been sold the *Spectator* commented that the School had, '*suffered a loss of prestige owing to the Governors having, in a weak moment, surrendered to the wish of a former Principal, [presumably Dr.Conolly] and left the old Endowed School . . . in order to migrate into rented premises.*' However, the *Spectator* continued by saying that the purchase of the building by the Council had enable them to vacate '*their mud cabin in Ballymagee Street*'!<sup>6</sup>

On several occasions during the Autumn of 1903, the Urban Council, too, lobbied the Governors on the subject of erecting new premises. It was they, who called a public meeting in the *Guild Hall of First Bangor Presbyterian Church*, on 12 November 1903. Several weeks later, when Mr.John McMeekan J.P., Chairman of Bangor Urban District Council, himself a former pupil, (and the author's great-great uncle), reported on the outcome of that meeting, he urged the Governors to '*push ahead with a scheme for the erection of a new school*' and, as a result, a joint committee was formed.<sup>7</sup>

*'The Governors of the School, together with a number of residents, formed a committee to endeavour to raise sufficient money to enable them to build a school, adequate to the demands made upon the Governors. Mr.W.I.Mahaffy [representing the Governors] and Mr.T.J. McConnell, J.P. [representing the Urban Council] were appointed joint secretaries of the scheme.'*<sup>8</sup>

The Maxwell Road site, first inspected by the Governors in 1899, was apparently still being considered towards the end of 1904, when John McMeekan told the Governors that he had heard that some of them were dissatisfied with that site, and that the Committee, of which he was one, also thought it unsuitable. Several weeks later, the Governors inspected sites at Central Avenue, Princetown Road, Upper Clifton Road, Prospect Road and a site on Hamilton Road, '*beside the Golf Club*' (presumably where the *Tonic Cinema* was eventually built, which would have been adjacent to the original *Connor House*!). Mr.Ashmore even suggested renting a portion of the Technical School, which the Urban Council was planning to build, but on 4 March 1905, on the proposal of F.H.G.Wilson, seconded by Rev.Dr.James Robertson, the Governors decided that they should take steps to '*acquire a site of one acre in the proposed new road off Ballyholme Road, at a rent of £14 per year, the landlord to make the road, and if possible to acquire the entire field, containing 1.352 acres*'.<sup>9</sup> An undated map makes the unlikely assertion that the site was conveyed from Lord '*Clanmorris to the Board of Governors Bangor E.S., 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1906*', the month of the opening of the new building.

## MR.ASHMORE'S DEPARTURE

During Mr.Ashmore's principalship, the only assistant teacher mentioned in the *Belfast and Province of Ulster Directory* was Thomas McBride, who taught Mathematics and Science. There is no reference to Mr.Finlay, Mr.Moffatt or the other Assistant Masters, mentioned during Dr.Conolly's Headmastership. Mr.Ashmore was, allegedly, not popular with the parents, who ultimately mounted a campaign against him which led to his departure. The last straw was, apparently, an occasion when he took a party of boys out in a yacht without notifying the parents of his intention, and was driven by a storm across to Portpatrick. '*The Headmaster was forced to*

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<sup>5</sup> Minutes of the Board of Governors, 4 November 1903.

<sup>6</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 19 July 1907.

<sup>7</sup> Minutes of the Board of Governors, 11 November 1903 and 1 December 1903.

<sup>8</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 7 September 1906.

<sup>9</sup> Minutes of the Board of Governors, 12 October 1904, 2 November 1904, 13 December 1904, 31 January 1905, and 4 March 1905.

leave, and the boys were removed from the School in large numbers'.<sup>10</sup> The Board of Governors' Minutes for 18 March 1905 refer, rather cryptically, to a letter from Mr. Ashmore and, 'after discussion, Mr. Ashmore informed the Governors that he had decided to resign'. It can be assumed that he was asked to resign, for it is unlikely that Mr. Ashmore would have gone of his own accord, since just two weeks earlier the Governors' had decided to acquire a site for new premises.

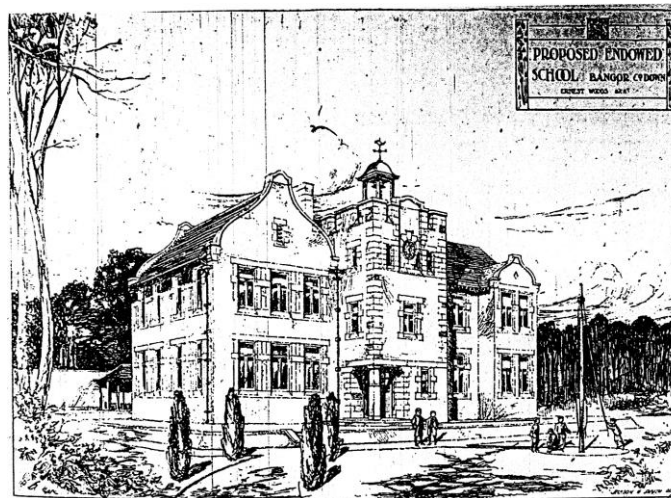
In May 1905, it was reported that,

*'The money received [from the sale of the Old Schoolhouse] is available to build another school, an undertaking which has been, for more than a year, under consideration, but is as far off as ever.'*<sup>11</sup>

In fact it was not 'as far off as ever' for, six weeks earlier, that same newspaper had carried a report of a meeting of the Committee, of which Rev. R. J. Morrell, Minister of Trinity Presbyterian Church, was Chairman, which reported on behalf of the Governors, that they had 'secured a site off the Ballyholme Road, about an acre and a half, from the Estate Office at a reasonable rent'. The Secretary also reported that W. J. Crosbie [sic] had generously offered to give £300, provided the £1500 necessary for building the School was raised inside two years.<sup>12</sup> Strangely, the Minutes of the Board of Governors make no reference to Mr. Crosby's generous offer.

Mr. Ashmore subsequently went to Canada where he became Principal of Cranbrook High School in British Columbia. In November 1916 he joined the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force as a Private in 2<sup>nd</sup> Field Ambulance, Canadian Army Medical Corps and just six months later, on 6 May 1917, he was killed 'while succouring the wounded'. He was survived by his wife Mary, who was living in Mission City, British Columbia and he was buried in the cemetery of Aubigny-en-Artois, some 15 kilometres north west of Arras.<sup>13</sup> His name is on the School War Memorial.

Plans for the new School were drawn up, but by the time a sketch of the proposed building appeared in the *Spectator* in December 1905 Mr. Ashmore had been replaced by Rev. James McFeeters, B.A. R. E. Ward, who had been associated with the School since its foundation, did not live to witness these developments; on 29 November 1904, the *County Down Spectator* announced his death at the age of 86. He was succeeded on the Board of Governors by his only child, Matilda, Lady Clanmorris.



A sketch of the proposed building, described as 'a really handsome pile of buildings'.

Note the absence of the right hand end of the modern building, and Crosby House, the Headmaster's residence, which was not built until 1914.

<sup>10</sup> Jack McFeeters, *Go and Find it: The Autobiography of an Octogenarian Doctor* (1980), p.14.

<sup>11</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 26 May 1905.

<sup>12</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 7 April 1905.

<sup>13</sup> *County Down Spectator*, 5 May 1918; *Veterans' Affairs Canada* website.